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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000812

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [AO](#)
SUBJECT: ANGOLA - CABINDAN PEACE ACCORD SIGNED

REF: A. LUANDA 00740

[1](#)B. LUANDA 00806

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CYNTHIA EFIRD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On August 1, 2006, the GRA and the Cabindan Forum for Dialogue (FCD) officially signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Peace in Cabinda. In attendance at this event were the highest officials of all three branches of the GRA, including the acting President Roberto de Almeida. The FCD delegation was lead by its President Antonio Bento Bembe and included a number of Cabindan traditional leaders. In speeches during the ceremony GRA officials, including de Almeida, focused on the importance of Cabinda's special status and the implementation of the accord. Bembe speech covered similar issues, but also brought attention to the possibility of "acts of terrorism" following the signing of the Memorandum. The President of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), Nzita Tiago, and the leaders of Mpalabanda continue to criticize the accord. Bembe seems to have the support of Cabinda's traditional leaders, the political base of power in Cabinda, while Tiago continues to represent some elements of the FLEC and Mpalabanda the elite, intellectual minority. Tiago and Mpalabanda issued statements in which they reject the Memorandum. The signing of the Memorandum is important, but even more important, especially for the citizens of Cabinda, will be the peaceful implementation of the accord. End Summary.

Highly-Attended Ceremony

[1](#)2. (U) At 12:35 local time on August 1, 2006 the GRA's Minister of Territorial Administration, Virgilio de Fontes Pereira, and the President of the Cabindan Forum for Dialogue (FCD), Antonio Bento Bembe, officially signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Peace in Cabinda in the city of Namibe, the capital of Angola's southeastern-most province. Over 35 representatives from the FCD, including Antonio Bento Bembe and a number of Cabindan traditional leaders, arrived in Namibe on July 31. The GRA delegation, led by Roberto de Almeida, currently serving as the acting President, arrived on August 1. Also included were Joao Baptista Kussumua, the acting Prime Minister; Jeronimo Wanga, the acting President of the National Assembly; and Cristiano Andre, the President of the Supreme Court. Also invited to witness the ceremony were all GRA Cabinet members, the membership of the National Assembly, opposition party leaders, the diplomatic community, religious leaders, and members of civil society.

[1](#)3. (U) In a speech given during the ceremony, de Almeida called upon all parties to "proceed with efforts to overcome

the basic problems that affect the lives of Cabindans." Specifically mentioning the GRA acceptance of Cabinda's special status, de Almeida noted that this status would allow future generations to better manage the natural and human resources of Angola. Pereira noted that "the GRA guarantees its total engagement in the execution" of the Memorandum. He also stated the GRA's willingness to work with the international community during the implementation of the accord. Bembe also called upon the international community to assist in the implementation of the accord. During his speech, Bembe pointed out that certain "enemies of peace" could carry out "acts of terrorism" following the signing of the accord. He called on those remaining skeptics to "participate in the building of peace and the reconstruction of the province."

¶4. (C) Contacts in the British and Dutch Embassies told PolOff that, besides the late arrival of de Almeida, the ceremony went as planned. The location selected was an older colonial building, mostly likely one of the only in Namibe that could accommodate such a large group. Both GRA officials and the diplomatic corps paid particular attention to who attended the event. Noticeably absent was Minister of Interior Roberto Leal Monteiro "Ngongo," UNITA President Isaias Samakuva, the Bishop of Cabinda Filomeno Vieira Dias, and a representative from the French government. (Note: On August 1, UNITA issued a statement noting the importance of the peace process, but challenging the accord due to lack of full representation and the decision to not grant Cabinda full autonomy. End Note.) The USG's absence was noted, but given the press releases in Luanda and Washington and a statement by Ambassador Efird our position in favor of a peaceful resolution of outstanding issues was obvious to all parties. Privately, EmbOffs have made it clear that while we support peace in Cabinda, we do not support Bembe and his

LUANDA 00000812 002 OF 002

actions against American citizens. Diplomatic sources also reported that the GRA has only allowed the Papal Nuncio in Angola, Angelo Beccio, to read the Memorandum of Understanding -- which remains unpublished as of yet.

Detractors Continue to Speak Out

¶5. (U) While an overwhelming majority of the press coverage over the past couple of days has been positive, including statements of support from the Cabindan Catholic Bishop, Filomeno Vieira Dias, and Luis Ranque Franque, the founder of FLEC, the President of FLEC Nzita Tiago and the leadership of Mpalabanda have continued their efforts to undermine the accord. Tiago put out an August 1 press release stating his rejection of the Memorandum. Noting his willingness to enter into a dialogue with the GRA, he reiterated his hope for a response to his personal letter to President dos Santos. He also renewed FLEC's call for a referendum on the Cabinda, stating that "the Cabindan people do not accept this accord" (Ref A).

¶6. (C) Mpalabanda has continued to apply steady pressure against the GRA and Bembe, even alleging in independent newspaper articles that fighting has continued in Cabinda after the first cease-fire. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Deputy Country Director, Fabrizio Carboni, has received no reports of fighting in Cabinda. When asked if Mpalabanda or the FLEC, the only sources for these reports, were fabricating the statements, Carboni said he was "surprised that none of his office's contacts in Cabinda had contacted them about the new fighting." (Note: The ICRC is the only international organization with a mandate that allows it to have an active, regular field presence in Cabinda. End Note.) Mpalabanda released on August 2, a press statement noting its decision to not recognize the accord and criticizing the GRA for not working to honestly resolve the problem.

Comment - Peaceful Implementation Most Important

¶17. (C) Tiago and Mpalabanda were unwilling to enter into a viable discussion with the GRA -- possibly misjudging their relative weakness vis-a-vis the GRA. Bembe recognized that the GRA was willing to give the FLEC a face saving solution and engaged with the GRA. As the President of the FCD he brought legitimacy to the negotiations and apparently allowed the GRA to work out a deal with the Cabindan traditional leaders that are the political power base in the province. Government media sources report that over 500 FLEC fighters have moved into quartering sites waiting to be demobilized and reintegrated into the National Police or the Armed Forces of Angola indicating that Bembe may be able to deliver as negotiated. We are attempting to verify this information through ICRC and military contacts. Current political commentary is focused exclusively on the splintering of the FCD, and has yet to find a way to evaluate the most important factor -- the will of the Cabinda people. Without credible polling and based on anecdotal evidence from EmbOffs who have visited and spoken to Cabindans recently (Ref A and B), one can only assume that like most Angolans, the average Cabindans are tired of fighting and wish only to have a better life. For them the most important part of this Memorandum of Understanding is not who was present at the signing, but the reality of a successful and peaceful implementation of the accord.

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